



# Maricopa County

## News Release

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## Happy Holiday Eating

### Ho-ho-holiday tips to stay healthy

The winter holidays bring numerous opportunities to indulge: from family dinners, to work place potlucks, to buffets at friends' houses. It's easy to get distracted with all the visitors and so many preparations to make but being diligent will keep you and others from getting sick.

"The two biggest culprits for causing sickness are dirty hands and cross contamination of surfaces" said John Kolman director of the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department. "Cooking dinner, visiting with friends, making cookies, decorating the house...all that jumping from activity to activity can lead to an increase of illness if you aren't careful." The solution? First, is hand-washing. Make sure to lather soap for at least 20 seconds before rinsing to make sure hands are clean. The second is to avoid cross contamination of surfaces.

Cross contamination occurs when, for example, you use a cutting board and knife to cut raw meat then use the same cutting board and knife for food that is served to guests as they arrive. To prevent cross contamination, make sure you clean and sanitize surfaces and utensils between uses.

All the food offered means more chances of food borne illness. Potlucks and buffets increase the chance for food to dip into the danger zone (40 to 140 degrees Fahrenheit) which is when bacteria thrive and multiply. The best way to avoid the danger zone is to keep cold foods cold by nesting items in a container in a bed of ice. Using smaller portions on the buffet line means more food can remain in the oven, crock pot or refrigerator at correct temperatures. If food has been sitting at room temperature for more than two hours, throw it out. Visit the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Web site <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/> for details on specific foods and storage recommendations.

People tend to bake more during the winter holidays - special treats not available during the rest of the year. With so many seasonal treats it's easy to forget about food allergies. "You have to speak up and ask what's in your food," said David Ludwig division manager of the Environmental Health Division of the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department. "You can endanger your health if you eat something and you are allergic to any of the ingredients." Some of the most common food allergies are to dairy, wheat, and nuts, which are widely used in baking.

The last important reminder is to keep aware of any food recalls. "Food recalls happen all year long. It's easy to tune them out when you are bombarded with so much advertising during the holidays" said Ludwig.

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You can keep aware of food recalls by visiting <http://www.fda.gov/safety/recalls/default.htm>. For recalls specific to meat, poultry & eggs see [http://origin-www.fsis.usda.gov/Fsis\\_Recalls/index.asp](http://origin-www.fsis.usda.gov/Fsis_Recalls/index.asp).

For more information about food safety, call the Environmental Services Department at: (602) 506-6616, or visit: [www.maricopa.gov/envsvc](http://www.maricopa.gov/envsvc) .

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